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coraddi
fall

As We See It...

Autumn fury, autumn madness, autumn birth and death, autumn music—these you will discover in the Fall issue of *Coraddi*.

You will discover a change in policy: in the past *Coraddi* has operated on the unwritten law that only undergraduate work will be published within its covers. Such a policy, we feel, ignores the fact that no distinction is made between graduates and undergraduates in advanced writing and art courses. Yet graduate students have heretofore found little or no public recognition for their work. If the magazine claims to publish the best work produced on campus and that work comes from graduate students, it can no longer deny their opportunity to publish.

Behind this fall issue of *Coraddi*, in its selection and rejection of an encouraging number of submissions, in its staff session that ran far into the night, you will find an old, yet ever-new discovery. In an effort to find individuality we become conformists to misshapened patterns, to misconceptions of art and poetry and short story. We grow and pass through painfully real stages. We are at first intrigued with our personal differences, with the discoveries we have made of our own peculiarities. Frustrations and rejections wash us into another stage, a time of futility, of bleak failure and disappointment in ourselves and in the world. In an effort to salvage some meaning we wander, sometimes in the right direction, sometimes in the wrong. Sometimes we find and translate; sometimes we do not find and still translate. More often we cannot translate; we have no medium. Our conception of art is difference and change. We discard tradition and regularity in verse patterns before we have explored them; we do not save our irregular lines for irregular emotions. We write poems before we know what a poem is or what it does. We paint before we know what modern art is or what it does. We criticize and destroy that art which we do not understand. And we fail.

In our rebellion against conformity we often conform to our narrow notions of artist or writer; we force ourselves away from ourselves to a someone whom we do not know and whom we would detest if we did know. Poetry is not strangulation nor unusual reactions forced into stock words and meter. Art is not neurosis nor is it difference for the sake of difference. Short story is not morbidity for the sake of morbidity. Art is discipline, study, discovery, honesty; art is irregular reality.

This is a plea for that reality, for sincerity, for study and self-discovery, for discipline with peculiarity. This is a plea for mature artists and critics, artists and critics who know who they are and what they think and how to translate both.

MM

**Fall Issue
1956**

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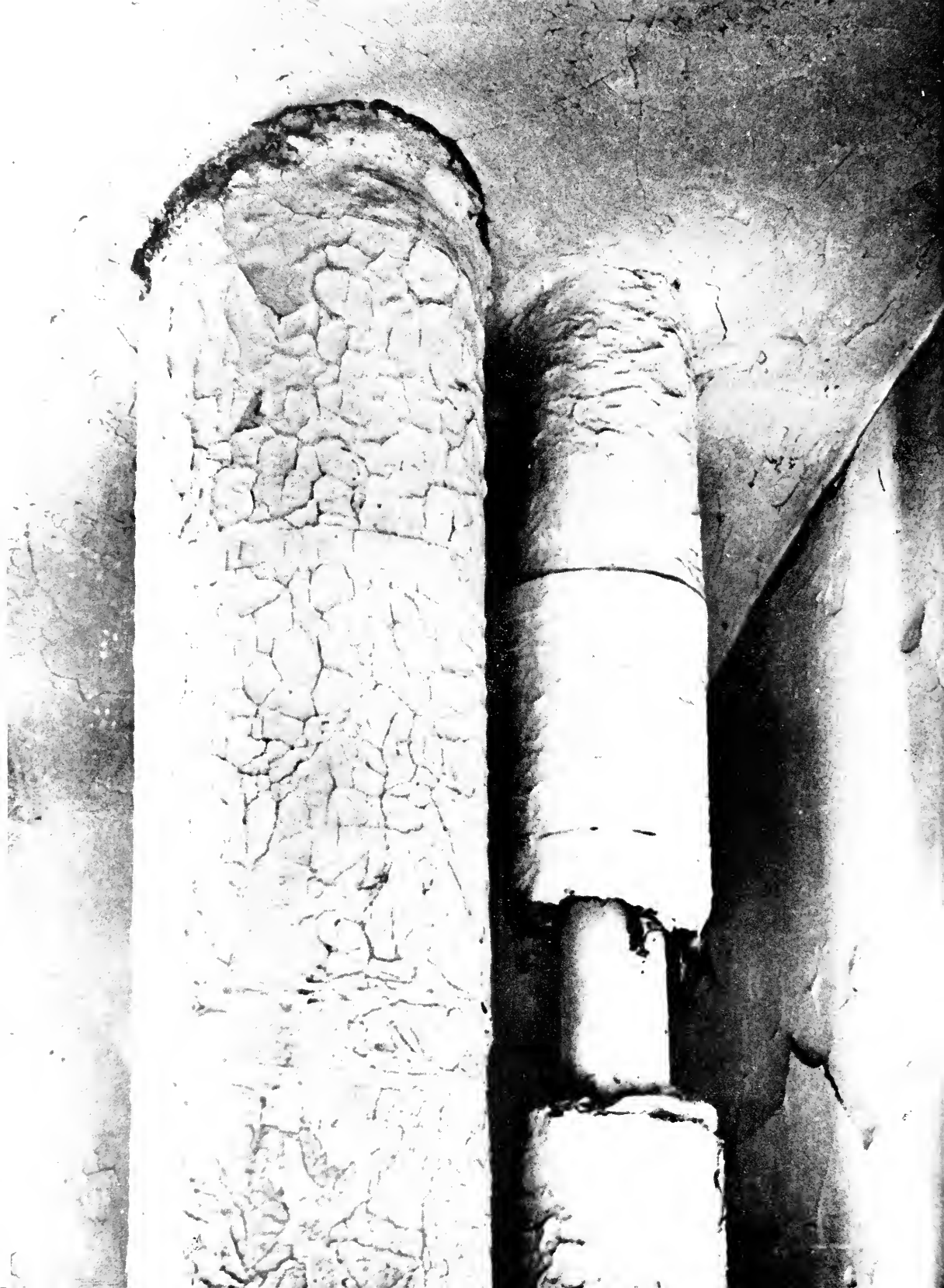
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The Twisting Branch

Mary Lee Gray

To reach the top of Mr. Williams' almost bald head, he had to stand on a bench. Now, twisting around, without leaving the bench, he reached back like a knotted tree limb, until he could grasp one of the tall, colored-liquid bottles standing on the shelf behind him. He smelled it, shook it vigorously, then sniffed again. Lifting the bottle high over his head, he splattered red drops at the figure reclining lazily in the barber chair.

"Hey, Ed. Watch it."

"Uh, sorry, Mr. Williams. Did it get on your sleeve? Here, let me. . . ." He bounced down from the bench, landing precisely on his good leg, and rubbed at the dark, oily spots. "There, O.K. See. Gone. All gone."

"Ummm." With an effort Mr. Williams bent forward and squinted at his sleeve. "Yep, they'll be O.K., I guess."

Opening a cupboard, Ed dug into the clutter of bottles, and crumpled, dirty towels and combs, until he pulled up a matted brush. With it he swatted at Mr. Williams' neck, blowing up flurries of hair. Then he pushed the chair, and it swung obediently around, facing the cracked, tobacco-brown mirror that covered the wall.

"How's that?" Ed pulled the mummy-like sheet from Mr. Williams' middle. Mr. Williams grunted, slid from the chair, and began to pull on his overcoat. Glancing into the mirror, he discovered a misplaced lock of hair, so he re-arranged it, patting it down carefully. Grinning contently, he prepared to leave.

"Well, Ed, see ya . . ." At the doorway he hesitated. "Timothy been in lately?"

"Uh, yes. Yesterday it was." The cash register rattled open; Ed dumped in the change.

"Don't understand why he stays there. There's places other than that house. Don't understand it." He clapped his hand against the door. "Now, Ed, you know Timothy—know him best of anyone hereabouts . . . Why don't you?"

For a moment Ed stood, without speaking, barely moving, except for his hand twitching against his withered leg. Then he snapped a smile which spread as evenly as melting butter over his face.

"Now, Mr. Williams, you know that's not your business at all."

He was speaking to a naughty child, soothingly, patiently, dismissing the child. And he picked up the white mummy-sheet, crossed the room, dumping it in the can labeled "dirty." Behind him the door clicked shut. It was a grey day, raining, foggy; the first really cold day of the winter. As Mr. Williams hurried through the rain, Ed stood at the window, watching until he disappeared into one of the curved glass fronts that lined Main Street. Above the glass and chrome entrances stretched a row of high wooden store facades, static, mostly unpainted, glowing in the glare of neon lights. A few townspeople hurried along the street; a car screeched to a stop for the corner light, swung around the corner and disappeared.

Across from the barber shop, a handful of people crowded on the front porch of the Welfare Office, waiting silently, staring at the closed door. An old man paced back and forth across the porch, pausing at each turn to knock on the glass door, shrug his shoulders and begin to walk again. Ed glanced at the clock above the mirror. Two-thirty. She was late. Miss Isabella was very late. Shaking his head, he went behind the curtain into the back room. It was getting cold; he had forgotten to light the oven. He jerked open the cupboard, looking for matches, then rummaged through the pile of clothes and papers on his cot. Finding one at last he lit the oven, and put a pot of coffee over a flame to heat. With one foot he nudged a cardboard box from under the cot, and picking it up, he settled into his rocking chair, the open box in his lap. He fumbled through the stack of newspaper clippings, reading one, then another, looking for a long time at each picture he came to. The Welfare Office.

Without warning, the front door creaked and a booming voice startled the quiet. "Ed, you here?"

Hastily stuffing the clipping back into the box, Ed jumped up and stuck his head through the curtain.

"Timothy? Come back. Just put on coffee. It ought to be done by now."

Timothy charged through the curtained doorway, seeming to expand into every corner of the

tiny room. He perched on the edge of the cot, immediately jumped up, strode over to the window and glared out at the weed-littered lot behind the shop.

"I come down here to ask your help, Ed . . . For us . . . both of us. Miss Isabella and me." He paused, breathed deeply. "It's old Lady Hendreson. Damn her."

"She's gone again?"

"No, not gone . . . She stayed this time, right here. She's in the attic."

"The attic."

"She's locked herself in." He sat down again, brushing his hand heavily across his eyes. "Listen, Ed, you used to know the Hendreson's. Didn't you? You told me that?"

Ed nodded. "That was a long time back."

"But maybe she'll still listen to you . . . You got me into this, you know, telling me that was a good place to live. It's cheap, maybe, but it ain't good. With those batty women. . . . Ed, you've gotta come try talking to her."

"Go up there . . . to the Hendreson place . . . No, no, Timothy, can't do it."

"Why not?"

"Well, uh . . . Say you've just asked the wrong one. I can't help you any."

"You've got to. I've been talking to her all morning, talking my blasted head off. She won't listen to me. Just keeps up that everlasting screaming—yelling that she ain't ever hated anybody like she hates Miss Isabella."

Ed poured two cups of coffee, handed one to Timothy, raised the other to his lips with trembling hands. Nervously he jerked the rocking chair back and forth, rocking with almost convulsive movements.

"She don't hate Miss Isabella."

"That's not the point. She's in the attic and no telling what she'll pull next. Next thing she'll be settin' the whole place on fire."

"She just can't hate Miss Isabella."

"Will you come talk to her, Ed?" He leaned forward, pleading with his hands. "Miss Isabella won't have no doctor. And she sure didn't want me coming here. But I did anyway. Somebody's gotta do something. Miss Isabella just walks around worrying about that Welfare Office, but she's scared to leave the house. And she's scared green of the old lady."

"But my leg . . ."

"The devil . . . You can make it that far."

Rocking silently, Ed gazed at Timothy, not seeing him at all; thinking, but not being able to really think. Puzzled, Timothy waited.

"Maybe I should." He spoke slowly, uncertainly. "Maybe so. But not now."

"When? You gotta come soon."

"Uh . . . a bit later. I, I have to lock up, and then I'll come. You get on back there, Timothy. You shouldn't have left Miss Isabella alone."

"You ain't kidding? You'll come?" Ed nodded yes, he would come. Timothy left then, looking relieved, even smiling a little. He had knocked the burden from his own shoulders, had handed it over to someone else. Ed knew that Timothy would probably even stop and have a beer on the way back. To relieve his nerves. Absently, Ed performed the mechanical duties of closing up shop; latching the back door, turning off the gas, closing the coffee can, so he would not be sharing it with the mice. Usually he was friendly with the mice; he enjoyed listening to their cracklings during the quiet nights, but he disliked finding suffocated corpses in his coffee bin. So now he closed it. Hurrying to the front of the shop, he found his old slicker and boots and his cane. At the mirror he stopped abruptly, and looked at himself. What a long time ago it had been. He felt that he was being pushed back across a chasm of time. He had changed, but nothing else could. Now his face was gaunt, crevices ran zig-zag patterns, like gullies of an overflowing river, across it; his eyes, deep set, were yet a livid blue. Shaking his head, he dug into his pocket, searching for his cigar. No sense. It would get wet and ruined in the rain. Before he departed, he carefully locked the door behind him.

The rain slashed against him, seeping through the cracks in his raincoat, trickling down his neck, down into his boots. On the Welfare Office porch, the crowd had increased by two or three, and they looked up simultaneously as he passed, gaping ostrich-like at him. Nodding quickly and absently, he hurried past, moving with difficulty, in a rolling, uneven gait, leaning heavily on his cane as he waded through water and ponds of mud. Walking rapidly, Ed followed the weaving streets, and, suddenly discovering a once familiar path, he cut across a vacant lot, and followed another street. Unpaved this time, poorer, ill-used, and then across the highway into a forgotten road. Finally he stood before the iron lace entrance gate of the Hendreson house. Opening it, he waded through the ankle-deep moat of leaves that flowed across the yard, toward the house, which stood straight and prim,

(Continued on Page 12)

The Father Sought

Through the rented house the woman swept,
Swept rented floors and looked for dust of him,
While someone else's rats scratched in rented walls,
Cried dusty screams of belly-empty fear.
The woman-child lay down by them, turning
From the sound she understood to a fear within
The walls. In nothing understood had he
Appeared; in night's pink-green, in latticed gray
Of day, behind a glass, through gravel ground,
In dusty screams and frantic claws
Within the walls she knew of him. Within
Herself her fingers looked to see and saw
That lonely woman alone had not formed her
Until the sore fingers, bruised eyes of the hand,
Must be bathed and scrubbed and soothed and
never be well.
The woman died and left her body to seek;
The woman-child looked, too, grieve-mute and
frenzy-blind,
Found parts of him in maleness, never the whole.
Until she heard him in a Voice, saw him
In a shaft of light through crimson window stain—
This he in concentrate, in purity.
Yet what was thought is God is but a fist
Of noisy stones once carved in pain, such pain
That cannot carve again, stone God forgive,
Can only warm the stones, stone God forgive.
The light of later years on early ones
Forgot the search and packed it deep and tight;
A search continued with no sense of what
Was sought. She found another child, waiting
Discovery of self and her. He brought
A tenderness of pain she had not known,
A touch demand and give she once had sought
But since forgot, a Spring life-death that must
Be love. He would have them leave the dark
Of children and burst upon the blazing sun
Of noon. The dark was clawing, dusty screams,
Was madness fury, single misery,
And she would have the sun, and wanted it.
But as his face would swallow hers,
Memory burst before the noon and poured
Out ugliness and guilt that pushed away
The strange-familiar face both sought and fled.
The door of discovery jammed and this the stop:
You are of virgin birth—no miracle
But accident, hideous, accident—
Must not, cannot know the sun.

Martha Moore

CONFESSIONS OF FELIX KRULL

Review by Sarah Bradford

"As I take up my pen at leisure and in complete retirement—in good health, furthermore, though tired, so tired that I shall only be able to proceed by short stages and with frequent pauses for rest—as I take up pen, then, to commit my confessions to this patient paper in my own neat and attractive handwriting, I am assailed by a brief misgiving about the educational background I bring to an intellectual enterprise of this kind. — Thomas Mann, *Confessions of Felix Krull*.

Thomas Mann, termed a "pedagogical novelist" in a generation of modern novelists, has made his final exposure of society in the *Confessions of Felix Krull*, *Confidence Man*. Originally intended to be a two volume work, *Felix Krull* may lack the profundity of *Buddenbrooks* or the *Magic Mountain*. But it is perhaps a more forceful pronouncement on the mores of modern civilization in the person of Felix Krull, swindler, rogue, and defender of all that society condemns.

Although written in the author's usual heavy, magisterial style, this last novel is somewhat of a departure from the Mann theme of the artist's relation to society. The artist type, portrayed in Felix, is generally treated as an aberration or abnormality in society, usually a man alone and unaccepted. On the contrary, Felix Krull is completely accepted and triumphant. Mann, who unfortunately died before he could write of the later life of Felix, undoubtedly identified himself with his subject. It must be more than a coincidence that Felix and Mann were born in the same year.

Felix Krull is supposed to be looking back over his past life after a long stay in prison. He reviews his fabulous career from his childhood in a villa on the Rhine to his entrance into the aristocratic circle of Lisbon. From the time of his infancy,

Felix knew that he was an exceptional person. He calls himself "a favorite of the powers that be and actually composed of finer flesh and blood," and further describes himself as "so long innocent and unconscious, a child and dreamer indeed, my whole life long." It was this remarkable innocence, or lack of moral precepts, that beguiled and conquered wherever he went. Without effort, Felix manages to satisfy his every desire and to move into the highest of social classes. He steals, lies, and commits unbelievable crimes; and, unlike Raskolnikov, he succeeds because he has no conscience.

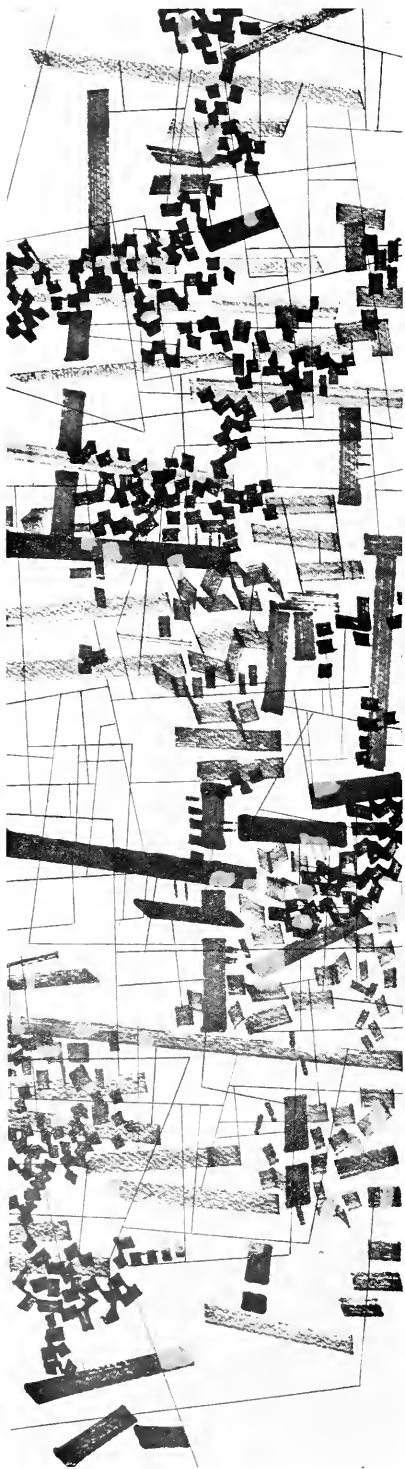
Mann is at his satirical best in the bedroom scene between Felix, then elevator boy in a Paris hotel, and Madame Houpfle, a wealthy writer whom Felix has previously robbed. Mme. Houpfle, delighted by Felix's amatory skill, screams, "Get up, as you are, thievish god, and steal! . . . Prowl around my room on cat feet and catch the mice! You will do this favour for your Diane, won't you?" She begs Felix to take her jewels. Mann's women characters unashamedly discard all pretenses when exposed to the magnetic person of Felix Krull.

In addition to robbing wealthy old women and seducing the innocent and otherwise, Felix discovers that he has a deep interest in the fascinating subject of Being. For ten pages Felix listens spell-bound to Professor Kuckuck's scientific theories and later takes two tours through the professor's museum in Lisbon. The reader is baffled by this unsuspected side of Felix's nature until Mann reveals the reason for his interest. Felix is entranced by the evolution of man from an animal-like creature to the perfect specimen of humanity—*himself*. Through this instance as in others, Mann expresses the egotism of all men.

But Thomas Mann does more than write a parody on the average man; he comments decidedly on the moral order of the twentieth century. In the hands of the author, civilization is revealed as a mask over the inherently barbarian character of mankind. Here is the final joke on society as, ironically, it serves the thing it most detests. The reader also falls to the charms of Felix and is secretly glad that Mann never wrote the sequel that would have seen the capture and punishment of a hero.

Anna Tilson





Inhibition

The part of me that is maniac, the part
That fills all but my lips and tongue,
That lives in my sparrow fingers and whip'o'will
brain,

Nurses the quiet, smaller part of me,
That part of me that comes through my mouth as
words.

The maniac, with insane care, is child
Tending doll, dressing baby, feeding child,
Indulgent, anxious lest the doll tumble
And crack her placid head or lose a leg.
Quiet maniac watches the doll in dance
Or song and waits with jealous greed to hear
The wail of pleased and sick applause—quiet
Maniac except on wild autumnal nights
When she murders ward and screams triumph at
last

With fury of giving too much care and love,
With unrecognized hate and disguised intent that
fools

Only the fool. Standing over the bloodless doll.
She is spread with cold by wind that spreads the
leaf

With mist; her eyes float through rage as diffuse
light

Floats through rain. Her voice is the siren
Of death racing toward crushed car on slick
asphalt.

She spins and whirls and collapses in a heap
And sobs the helpless sobs of guilty mania.
Her tears revive the bloodless toy, moans tell
Apology; and so she pampers toy
Again, indulges, loves, controlled by shame.

Virginia Griffin

Anna Tilson

Colonel Bufrey

Colonel Bufrey carried his small, slightly teddy-bearish figure erectly as he walked down the quiet, nearly empty street. The soft, tantalizingly cool late-afternoon air gave not a hint of how blisteringly hot the day had been. Colonel Bufrey shifted the paper bag full of groceries from his left to his right arm so he could get the full effect of the soothing river breeze, which came between the houses and caressed him, strengthening his rubbery bones. The weather forecaster had, for once, been right when he had announced last night that relief from the heat wave was in sight. Colonel Bufrey became slowly aware of the absence of the bands of small urchins that were usually playing ball in the street or hopscotch and cops and robbers and Red Rover, Red Rover, on the sidewalks.

The colonel turned his head to the left and slightly upward so that he was looking at the General, who was walking beside him. The colonel said, "Why, it must be later than I thought. Martha is probably wondering where I am, and she'll probably fuss at me for bringing the groceries home late. She likes to get through with supper, you know, so she can watch the plays on television."

"Yes, I know," replied the General. "You told me that she especially likes the romantic ones that end happily."

"Yes, that's right," beamed the colonel, happy that the General remembered. "But Martha hardly ever gets to look at her favorite plays—those are the ones that come on in the morning—because she can't watch while she does her sewing."

To this the General made no comment and the colonel, as he thought of Martha waiting for him, hurried his pace a trifle, then began to reflect on his pleasant day.

As had become habitual lately, he and Martha had been awakened early by the heat. He had put the bread crumbs for the birds on the window sill and had stood watching with interest as they began to eat. He had watched for a while as the birds had clawed and flown and screamed at each other as they jabbed frantically with their scarred beaks at the food. A large filthy gray bird had turned and slashed at a timid white pigeon, ripping a jagged tear in its pure throat and causing a spurting fountain of blood to erupt from the slit as the small bird teetered tiredly back and forth on the ledge, then fell, slowly and quietly as a soul, into the canyon of the alley. The colonel

had marveled at the split-second speed of the gray bird and had thought, "What a splendid soldier that bird would make!" He began to look interestedly around at the other birds to choose soldiers from the group, but at that moment Martha had called him to breakfast. He had not told Martha about the birds—she would not have understood.

He sat down resignedly to his own breakfast of toast, eggs, half-raw bacon, and coffee. In all their years together Martha had never learned how to cook bacon properly — it invariably turned out either blackened and smoking furiously or with great disgusting splotches of raw meat. The colonel, slamming down his coffee cup and sloshing coffee into his plate and on the table, had fumed, as he invariably did, that there was no reason why she could not learn to fry bacon if she put her mind to it. In all of the years he had been in the army he had never seen such a revolting piece of bacon, and if army cooks could fry delectable bacon for thousands of men, then it was utterly stupid of her not to be able to prepare decent bacon for two people. His referring to the army had made her mad, as it usually did. She had retorted, "Even though you've been out of that cursed army for fourteen years, it's still more a part of your life than I am. Wearing those old army clothes and telling everybody (here she had stood up straight and spoke in a weak voice resembling his own). 'That isn't the way we did things when I was in the army. We had discipline and every man did what he was told to do, no matter what the order was. He never questioned his superior and everything was done immediately and done right. We had discipline! There was no room for mistakes. And we didn't have none of this coddling of the poor little soldier boy—giving him passes to go home to see his mother, and dances and shows—there was no room or time for the individual, but it was what was best for the army that was done.' " Here she had stopped mimicking, but had continued to berate. "John, I didn't mind when I had to continue taking in sewing to keep us up after you were discharged and declared unable to work because of being wounded, but now everybody says I'm married to a crazy old man who goes around talking to and quoting a general. A general who has been dead for twelve years. A dead general talking over old times with you and giving you your orders for the day—telling you to go down and talk to the neighbors or, 'Go in to see this movie, John, it looks like a war story'; while I sit here all day and sew to keep——."

Here, the colonel, who had been in the process of rising, reached his height and said softly, with a hurt look on his pale face, "Don't attack the General, Martha. You know I don't like you to do that."

Then she had risen and, putting an arm around his narrow shoulders and with her finger gently rubbing the wrinkles on his forehead, had said, "I'm sorry, John. At least the General doesn't get you into trouble. It's just another of those wretched hot days, and I guess we're all a little edgy. Oh, I do hope the weatherman was right and it will really be cooler by tomorrow; then we'll all be feeling more like human beings. You go on out now, John, and have a pleasant day. Why don't you go down by the river—maybe there'll be a breeze. Mrs. Osborne is coming for some alterations, so I'll have plenty to keep me busy. Now don't forget to stop at the grocery store on your way home; I have the list all made out. And, John, do remember to come home early, because you know my favorite programs are on tonight." Then she had given him the grocery money and his lunch money, and he had descended into the early morning.

He had been about to turn toward the river when the General suddenly spoke to him saying, "John, we're going to the park today. We'll sit on one of the benches under the trees and watch the swans on the pool. You'll talk to some of the old men who come to sit, and maybe some one will feed the pigeons and you can pick out some more soldier-birds."

The colonel had been elated! The General had seen the gray pigeon and he was saying, "we" will go to the park, instead of just giving the colonel a command! The General must be feeling especially pleased and happy today, for he hardly ever said "we". The colonel had marched immediately to the park and placed himself on a shaded bench near the gaily-awned peanut stand in front of the pool. As the morning walked wearily on, the sun had become glaringly bright so the colonel had moved to a grassy spot under a nearby tree, taking with him a tall, sparse old man who had sat down on the bench. The two warriors had talked agreeingly of the old rugged man's army as compared to the present soft excuse. They fiercely agreed that the backbone of a successful force was unswerving devotion to carrying out the orders of the commander. The colonel had told of personal experiences of witnessing extreme bravery and valor as a result of devotion to duty. He spoke of a soldier who, under orders to take a hill, with his left hand and arm completely shattered and hanging, his left cheek merely a flapping piece of skin exposing the bone, and his legs shot from under him twice; had led

his men up the hill and over the brink where he had finally given in and rolled, dead, to the bottom of the other side, knocking down a few of the retreating enemy as he bumped and bounced, leaving a bright trail of his life on the rocks and small bushes which sprang up waving their red banners as he passed on his journey. The colonel then reflected, with sorrow, that he had never had an opportunity to prove his steadfastness. His friend comforted him by saying that there was still time to prove himself. At this, the colonel shook his gray head sadly and began to talk of the city.

They talked of the bustle, and greediness, and ugliness of the city. The two old soldiers looked at the happy children frolicking in the park and frowned over the evils of the generation younger than theirs, then tut-tutted over the black grisly path the world was steadily trodding. They remembered the magical days of youth with smiles and a faint increase in the pattering of the heart. The colonel bought some peanuts when it finally seemed that no one else was going to feed the pigeons and scattered some on the ground while holding a few in his hands. The birds came quickly, and greedily, flopping down on the ground and pouncing on the nuts like feathered rats. They descended onto his arms, beating their wings wildly to keep their clumsy bodies near the food, then pecking daintily with their well-honed beaks. The colonel had been exceedingly disappointed because all of the birds were awkward and fat. After a while the colonel's friend had said his family was expecting him for lunch so he had left. The General whispered in the colonel's ear that he liked this grizzled, ragged-bearded friend of his while the colonel beamed.

The colonel had walked to a cool drugstore, ordered a bacon and tomato sandwich, concluded that the cook must be an army man as was evidenced by the crisp bacon, and ate with satisfaction. As they were leaving the drugstore, the General observed, "John, an officer should be an example to his men. He should always keep himself spotlessly attired and well-groomed. That shirt you're wearing looks a bit worn. Let's go buy you another."

The colonel had been going to protest when he remembered that Martha, for some reason, had given him some extra money that morning, so he silently followed the General. When they reached the store of army supplies, the shop was practically deserted. The colonel browsed contentedly around, letting his finger trail fondly over helmets and gas masks, tracing the outlines of unloaded shells, becoming fascinated by the brilliant array of arm patches, insignias, medals, and ribbons. His sparkling eyes tore away from the bright bed of plaudits

and swept over the solid contours of the huge cannon at the back of the store. He mentally compared it with the small souvenir revolver in his closet and laughed at himself over the ridiculous contrast. He gazed at the khaki uniforms, seeing them marching smartly down the city street filled with excited, shouting people while the bands stirred every one with "The Stars and Stripes Forever." He stared at the deadly bayonets and hand grenades and tried on combat boots. At last, after fingering the material and making sure of the fit, he slipped on a khaki shirt, and paid his dollar, and walked proudly out of his cavern of enchantment.

As they walked away from the store, the General said, "Now we'll go down by the river for a walk."

When they reached the river there was a faint stirring as if the wind were straining to come awake after a deep relaxed sleep. The General and the colonel walked along, seeing the sea gulls swooping amid the wharves and tied boats. The stench of fish, shrimp, and rotting bait, and rotten wood rose from its haunches to meet them. The sky line of the big city could be seen across the river, its reflected eyes gloating over the small shacks and garbage dumps along the water's edge. The colonel saw a white-haired man sitting on one of the small boats and wandered down to speak to him. Finding that they had many common views, the colonel sat down for a visit with the old merchant seaman. After a long, comfortable, rather lazy afternoon of commenting, smoking, and speculating, the colonel, reaching into his pocket for a match and discovering a long-forgotten grocery list, realized it was time to leave. He said good-bye to his new companion and reluctantly turned toward the grocery store and civilization.

It was nearly closing time as the colonel strode into the store. He chose his listed items with swift decision and wheeled his four-wheeled cart laden with tomatoes, fruit-cocktail, and lima beans, purposefully toward the paying counter. Here, he discovered that he did not have quite enough money so he commanded the packing boy to leave out the bacon. When his monetary affairs had been settled, he hoisted the bag full of groceries onto his arm, gave a cocky salute to the packing boy, and started toward home.

Now, as the colonel reached his house, undistinguished from the other brownstones lining the dirty street, he turned to say good-bye to the General.

The General said, "Good night, John. I had a nice day today. I want to go back to the river again soon. John, that shirt looks remarkably better than the other. Now straighten up those

shoulders! A good soldier doesn't slouch." Then the General disappeared.

The colonel paused a moment savoring the new coolness of the air, then went into the house. He climbed the stairs, puffing a little, and knocked on the gray peeling door. He heard Martha turn the latch immediately, as if she had been standing waiting for his knock, and he marched in. He gave Martha a salute, a grin, said, "Just wait until I tell you about our nice day, Martha," and continued into the kitchen. Martha followed him silently into the kitchen and looked at him through furious eyes in her cold face. The colonel became aware of her silence and looked up at her from the grocery bag which he was emptying. He spoke, "Why what's the matter, Martha? Didn't the sewing go good today? We had a wonderful day. I talked to some new friends I found and bought this new shirt. Isn't it nice, Martha? And it really is getting cooler—just like the man said it would."

Martha, who had been gazing wordlessly at him, interrupted, "Oh, now did you really have a nice day, Mr. Soldier? Did you really? So you talked to some new friends. While I sat here in this oven all day and——."

The colonel protested, "But it's cooler——,"
(Continued on Page 16)



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The Twisting Branch

(Continued from Page 4)

securely protected by the stiff file of columns, standing perpetually at attention. Avoiding the formidable porch, he went to the back, pausing to glance around him, seeing the discarded well, the unused pump, the emptiness of the chicken yard. And he felt repulsion, not sorrow, at the nakedness. He raised his hand to knock at the back door, hesitated, then slowly descended the steps. No use. He walked across to the well, leaned against it, resting. The rain had ceased, leaving the air a cool, antiseptic cleanness, but the wind whipped through the vacant trees, torturing them into grotesque, ever-changing shapes. He could remember, or was it a vague dream-image memory; he could remember climbing the trees, exploring the twisting branches, looking for the hidden squirrel holes, or a bird's nest. His room above him in the big house was dark, the shades drawn, as he knew they always were; he knew the room would never be light again. Because he was dead.

"Ed!" The sound startled him. "Come in." Timothy whispered hoarsely, almost shouting. Ed obeyed. Retracing his steps, he entered the semi-darkness of the house, standing for a moment, blinking. Gradually the blurs focused. He was in the kitchen, long, dull, ugly kitchen. On either side, the walls reached up, encased in cupboards, which were doorless and empty; the sink and sideboards, and even the withered linoleum were unchanged. Neither man spoke; Timothy waited impatiently for a sign to continue.

"She's still upstairs." He ventured hopefully. "She stopped yelling. Maybe she's asleep."

"Yes," Ed replied. "And Miss Isabella. Where is she?"

"She went in the parlor and shut the door. Said she ain't gonna see you. But old Lady Hendreson's still upstairs . . ."

With Timothy leading, they went through the cavernous front hallway and started up the spiraling staircase.

"I live back in that room, the last one on the right. They let me have the room near the chimney part, but there ain't ever a fire in the fireplace. Gets pretty damn cold."

He talked on and on, repeating himself, anxiously filling up the silence. Ed nodded, then forgot to acknowledge the conversation. It was a tedious climb; his legs ached, and Timothy half-carried him up the last flight. The attic landing was small and square, barely deep enough for two people to

stand; it was dully lighted by a single bulb, which jutted out awkwardly from the wall. Timothy nodded toward the closed door.

"That's where she is. Bolted from the inside. If only Miss Isabella would let me get the police or the fire department up here; they'd be gettin' her out. But then, they ain't my family. Not really none of my business."

"Miss Isabella just doesn't want to make a lot of trouble."

"Yeah? I'll tell you what's wrong with that one. Just pride. Pure pride. She's sittin' down in that parlor right now stiff-necked as can be . . . And won't see you because you got a barber shop and not a bank. Why I stay here? Not worth it." He threw up his arms as if in despair.

"Now, Timothy, Miss Isabella's got a right to pride. She's from a fine family."

"And they ain't got a cent."

"But she's a good woman . . . Helping all those people."

"That welfare place. Just so people'll think good of her."

"She's a fine person, Timothy. And so's Mrs. Hendreson."

"Crazy as a loon."

"Timothy?" Miss Isabella thrust her head around the corner of the landing, and seeing that they were there, continued up the stairs. She was an extremely tall woman, a thin, shapeless pole; her hair was pulled back sharply from her thin face, making it seem thinner still. Her voice was shrill, yet, at the same time, curiously timid and withdrawn. As she came closer she held her body sideways a little as if trying to hide herself. She giggled nervously.

"Hello, Edwin. Thank you for coming."

Ed smiled tightly, shifted, began to search through his pocket for a cigar, but said nothing.

"We ain't tried to talk to old . . . to your ma anymore. You want to?" Timothy asked.

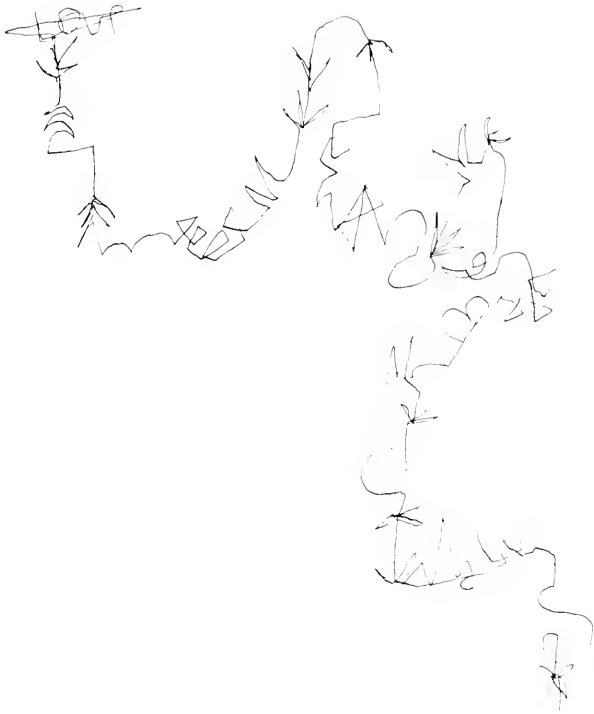
"Oh, no, no. Don't let her know I'm here. It'll just upset her."

"Then," he continued, "it's your turn, Ed. Knock on the door."

Ed knocked, lightly at first, then more loudly. There was no answer, and no sound from within the attic room. They looked at each other and Timothy shrugged his shoulders.

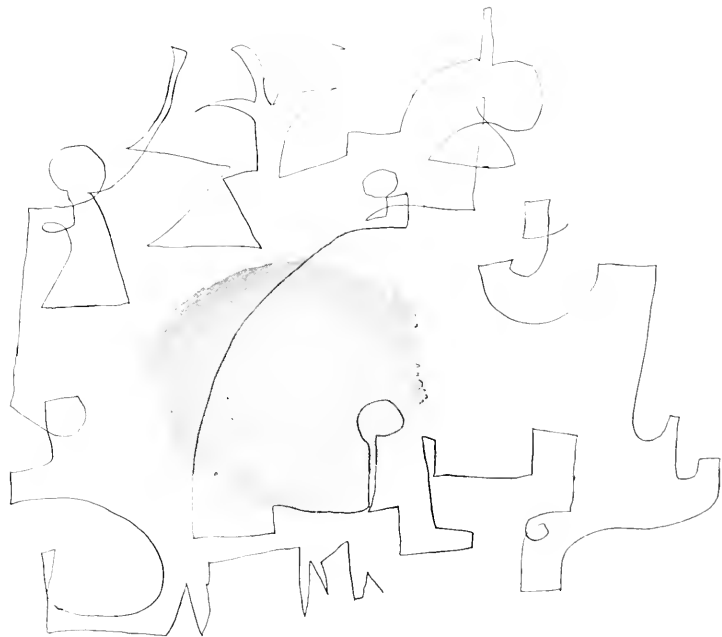
"Mrs. Hendreson. . . . Open the door." He glanced around at Miss Isabella, seeming to ques-

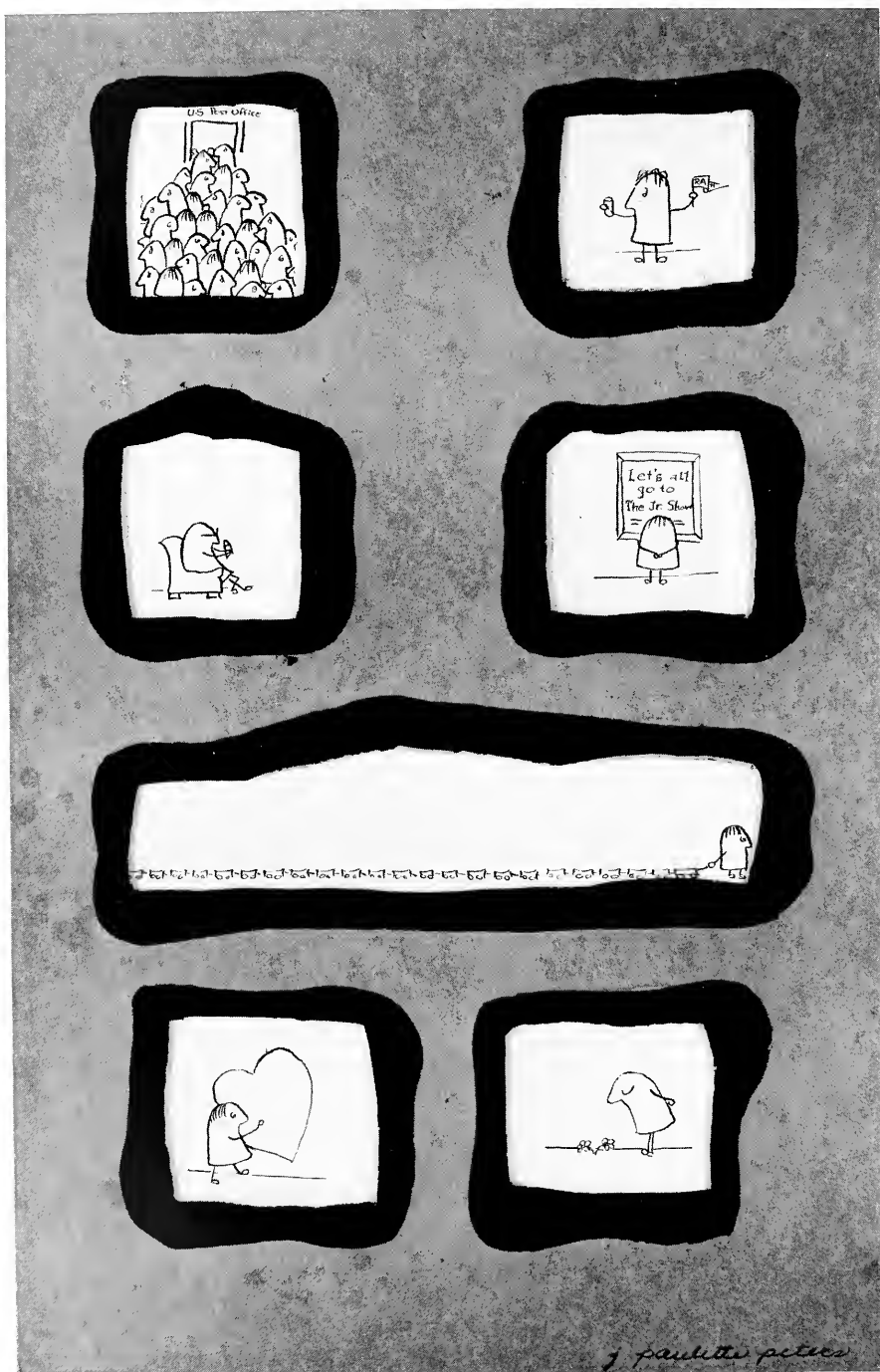
(Continued on Page 15)



Recta Bennett

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The Twisting Branch

(Continued from Page 12)

tion her, but she said nothing. He took a deep breath. "Aunt Mamie, it's Edwin. Let me in."

Mrs. Hendreson answered with a piercing scream, then began to cry hysterically. "Edwin, you've come home!"

"Yes, it's me. Will you open the door?"

"There's rats in here, Edwin. Rats . . . all over."

Timothy, staring wide-eyed, grasped the hand railing, and stood with one foot on the stairs, ready to run. Across from the door, as far away from it as possible, Miss Isabella pressed against the wall, dabbing her eyes with an oversized handkerchief.

"Aunt Mamie, that's O.K. I don't mind them."

"They'll bite you. Don't come."

"Those rats are dead, Mother." Isabella screamed. "Come out. They're dead."

Timothy leaned across the banister, and whispered something, but Ed could not understand.

"Aunt Mamie," he began.

"Then I'll stew them . . . and then I'll eat them."

Isabella sank back against the wall. "You haven't got a pot."

"What?"

"No pot, Mother. No pot."

Suddenly Mrs. Hendreson flung the door open and stalked out, clutching a limp rat in one hand. She shook it at Miss Isabella.

"It's breathing. Didn't I tell you? It's alive." She waved the animal toward Ed. And abruptly, her voice softened, became as gentle as if she were stroking a cat. "Come talk to me, Edwin. You haven't talked to me in such a long time."

Hesitantly, Ed went past Mrs. Hendreson into the attic room. Slamming the door, she bolted it, rattling the knob to assure herself that it was locked. The room was crowded with crates and discarded pieces of furniture and ancient knick-knacks, except in a corner near the window, which was cleared and spotlessly clean. There two chairs and a sofa were placed precisely, as if expecting Sunday visitors. After laying the rat which she held beside a second one on the sofa, Mrs. Hendreson settled herself in the chair facing the window. She was a tiny person; her feet barely brushed the floor, her dress was black and rumpled, her hair, equally rumpled. She waved her arm vaguely toward the sofa.

"They're dead. Oh, dear me, do sit down, Edwin. Talk to me."

"Yes . . . well."

"You never come see me anymore. You used to." She laughed gaily, patting her cheek lightly. "What parties we had, didn't we, Edwin?"

"Yes . . ."

"You know, one day I climbed that tree, that one, right outside the window." She hopped up, laughing again, went over to the window, pointing to the swaying branches. "And I got up there and just couldn't remember what I was looking for. But then, there *were* a lot of people yelling at me, so I really couldn't think. But all of a sudden I thought of you, Edwin, and how you used to climb the trees." She clapped her hands. "And I remembered that I was looking for you."

She sat down again, leaning toward Ed, who sat upright as if bolted to the chair.

"But I never found you. You were gone." She sighed. "Edwin, you look so old. You're not old at all. You're young."

"Not so young anymore, Aunt Mamie."

"You and Isabella are both very young. But I'm tired. Would you excuse me please, while I go to sleep."

"Come downstairs to your room, to your own bed, Aunt Mamie."

"Oh, dear me, no. This is quite all right."

She got up and he did, too, formally, bowing a slight courteous bow, because she would expect it. Moving away from him, back into the shadows, she lay in the triangular space formed as the roof slanted to meet the floor. And, closing her eyes, she seemed to sleep immediately, without moving again.

For a long time Ed listened to her uneven spasmodic breathing, which rippled the quiet of the house. The room grew darker. Shadows stretched across the floor, softened and faded into greyness; the greyness spread, dissolving the tooth-like contours of the ceiling beams. Cautiously he shifted in the chair, rubbing his throbbing legs. He wished that she would wake up, yet he dreaded it; dreaded the scene she might make, the noise and horror she could create. As she always had, for as long back as he could remember. He must have dozed, for without a sound she was suddenly directly in front of him, so close that she was almost touching him.

"Where is Isabella?"

"I'll get her for you. Or do you want to come look for her, too?"

"I want to go find her. Where is she?" She began to cry, a quiet sobbing, as a child would in a spasm of loneliness. With her help, Ed unlatched the door, and together, they began to feel their way down the stairway.

"Ed." The sound came from the darkness, from where it was impossible to tell.

"Yes."

"Is she with you?"

"Yes."

"Here, I'll help you." Timothy lifted the unresisting woman into his arms and carried her toward the lights at the end of the hall. At the door, Isabella met them.

"Mother. Are you all right?"

"Where have you been, Isabella?"

"Right here, Mother. Waiting for you. Would you like to lie down?"

"Yes, I'm very tired."

Timothy laid her in the bed, and she sank limply into the softness of the pillow, her eyes closed. Reaching out blindly, she grasped Isabella's hand and pulled her closer.

"Isabella," she whispered, "it's a shame Edwin had to die, isn't it, dear. He was such a wonderful boy."

"Yes, Mother."

"Such a shame . . . I dream about him, Isabella. Sometimes."

Leaving her to rest alone, they walked back through the voided rooms, into the kitchen. They stood together awkwardly, with nothing to say. Ed slipped on his overclothes.

"You . . . you must come to tea sometimes, Edwin."

Ed nodded, yes, he must.

Colonel Bufrey

(Continued from Page 11)

Martha emphatically went on, "In this oven, just waiting for the day to be over. Then waiting for you to bring the groceries so I could get through and watch my plays. I kept saying to myself, 'Now he'll be along any minute, Martha, you've got plenty of time. Don't worry!' Then just sitting and waiting, while *you've* had a *nice* day. And where'd you get that new shirt, Mr. Soldier? Eh? Where did you find the money for the shirt? Oh, no! John Bufrey, you didn't use the grocery money to buy that shirt!"

The colonel spoke eagerly, "Do you like it, Martha? Isn't it a nice shirt? Doesn't it look better than the other one? Don't you think it's a good fit?"

"Like it? Fits good? Why, as well as it could fit over your plump little chest." The colonel's eyes were wounded. "As for liking it, I'd like it a lot better if I could eat it. Why did you buy it anyway? You just bought a new one last week. The one you, no doubt, threw away when you got this one."

"W-w-w-w-well," stammered the colonel, "I thought I needed a new one."

"Oh, you did. And just what made you think you needed a new shirt? Oh-h-h, yes, I know what it was. It was the General, wasn't it?" The colonel's face slid into sadness. "He said, 'John, you need a new shirt. Let's go into this store and buy you one.' So John went. Yes, the General spoke and poor John jumped. The marvelous General who rules your life. Who was your idol in the army. Why, I'll bet your old General was just as selfish and as lazy as anyone else."

The colonel, who had become frightfully pale, interrupted fiercely, "Don't attack the General, Martha. You know I don't like you to do that."

But Martha had gone beyond warning. "Yes, I'll just bet he wasn't as grand as you say. He didn't care about his soldiers. You didn't see him out on a hill facing the enemy's fury. No, he was in some warm dry shack drinking coffee while the boys were being slaughtered. Why, he probably had soldiers waiting on him hand and foot, and every time some one's back was turned he was getting his forty winks. He didn't suffer any. His clothes never had any mud on them. And while the boys were marching into Kingdom Come through their own dead he was riding around in his car in some foreign city having a good time with the girls. Girls whose fathers and brothers and hus——."

The colonel lifted a large can of tomatoes from the pile of groceries and swung it with all of his might against her white head. He felt the impact, the resistance, and then the cracking of the brittle bone. Her thin body, not suspecting the attack and offering no defense, clutched surprisedly at the table, then, seeing death march towards her across the room, slid quietly to the floor. The colonel, looking out the window, saw a curious bird cease struggling with a bit caught in the wire and stare guardedly back at him. The colonel then whispered, "Yes, General, I know. Never let yourself fall into the hands of the enemy." Then he went into the bedroom, took his revolver from the closet, carefully loaded it, and standing at attention, placed the gun to his temple, and fired.

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